

Home » Academics » Theatre

## STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF BLACK LIVES MATTER

June 22, 2020

The Middlebury College Department of Theatre unequivocally asserts that BLACK LIVES MATTER. The recent murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and Tony McDade, among many others, are a horrific flashpoint bringing global focus to systemic racism and the state-sanctioned murder of Black people. We embrace the imperative for an intentional and ongoing effort to dismantle institutional racism and hold ourselves accountable in that pursuit.

We thank our students and alumni for stepping forward, in a moment when we did not, to demand this public statement of solidarity and a plan of action that addresses the systemic flaws of our practice. Today we commit to becoming intentional partners in the necessary transformation toward an anti-racist society through our individual and collective actions, pedagogy, and theatre-making.

Theatre, like many artistic disciplines, historically privileges the narratives, bodies, voices, and aesthetics of the dominant culture. As theatre makers and scholars, we recognize that we have perpetuated racism by centering whiteness and marginalizing BIPOC experiences. We must challenge our perceptions, re-dedicate our efforts, and bring these practices to an end.

The Department of Theatre is in the early stages of the work to decolonize our curriculum and infuse diversity into our production practices. These efforts have been too few, too individualized, and too easily sidetracked when we met with obstacles. We know we have fallen short, and for this we apologize to our students, and especially to BIPOC students, who have felt our mistakes most painfully.

We now commit ourselves as a united department to discontinue harmful practices and to create work that expresses the fullness of the human experience.

To that end:

- We will create a standing Committee on Anti-Racism and Decolonization comprised of students, staff, and faculty.
- All faculty and staff commit to annual and ongoing Implicit Bias, Equity, and Diversity training, including training particular to our discipline.
- We will examine and revise all syllabi with the intention of decolonizing our curriculum as a department.
- We recognize that our past production seasons have not prioritized BIPOC voices. We will build seasons that feature and elevate BIPOC experiences, playwrights, and actors.
- We will transform our season selection process to include students and the Committee on Anti-Racism and Decolonization.
- We acknowledge that race, gender, ability, and sexuality impact how individuals approach a role and are seen in that role. We will continue to educate ourselves and will adhere to best practices in casting. We commit to anti-racist casting and will continually interrogate and revise our casting processes.
- We will engage in thoughtful dialogue in order to achieve responsible visual representation of our work. Students will be asked for consent before their images can be used in promotional materials.

This list is not exhaustive. The work ahead will require courage, diligence, and above all, ongoing collaboration among faculty, staff, and students.

We are eager to do better.

Michole Biancosino  
 Mirjam Brett  
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 Cheryl Faraone  
 Robin Foster Cole  
 Claudio Medeiros  
 Allison Rimmer  
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Courtney Smith  
Mira Veikley  
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## Resources

- The BIPOC Project: <https://www.thebipocproject.org/>
- “Implicit Bias and Microaggression Awareness” SafeColleges course (needs a valid ID to access) <https://middlebury.safecolleges.com/courses/details/F3783AA6-7634-11E8-BA72-18A4CB7F7112>
- “Resources for Racial Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” League of Resident Theatres (LORT) <http://lort.org/edi-resources>
- “Color-Conscious Casting: Three Questions to Ask” by Lavina Jadhvani (21 December 2014) <https://howlround.com/color-conscious-casting>
- “‘But Do We Have the Actors for That?’: Some Principles of Practice for Staging Latinx Plays in a University Theatre Context” by Brian Herrera (March 2017) <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/653164/pdf>
- “A Message from TAPS Chair, Dr. Patricia Ybarra” on Coalitional Casting <https://www.brown.edu/academics/theatre-arts-performance-studies/news/2015-12/message-taps-chair-dr-patricia-ybarra>
- “Diversity in the Discipline” The Standing Conference of University Drama Departments (SCUDD) <https://scudd.org.uk/activities-campaigns/diversity-in-the-discipline/>
- “Universities Can And Should Do Much More To Address Systemic Racism” by ‘Funmi Olonisakin (12 June 2020) (needs registration to access) <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/opinion/universities-can-and-should-do-much-more-address-systemic-racism>
- About the Jubilee <https://jointhejubilee.org>
- “What If: The JUBILEE’s Vision of Unity and Action” (24 October 2018) <https://howlround.com/what-if>
- Whiteness: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/whiteness>
- What is White Supremacy: <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/10/the-language-of-white-supremacy/542148/>
- Academics for Black Survival and Wellness, a weeklong course on anti-Black racism awareness started 6/19/2020, but other resources and videos on their page available, too: <https://www.academics4blacklives.com>
- “Cultural Appropriation and the Arts”, James O. Young, 2010

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